

So hungry

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So hungry

by [AllAborde \(Bordementions\)](#)

Summary

Don Quixote 's coworker gets a little too close during one of her feedings

Notes

A ton of tags and story to be added, just wanted to get a small first chapter out so its at least on the board

Chapter 1

The engine of Mephistopheles rumbled low beneath your boots—a mechanical heartbeat, loud and proud. The surge of vitality in no small part to the towering pile of bodies that you and your fellow sinners had just finally finished dumping inside. The vibrations pulsed up through the soles of your shoes, familiar as you dragged yourself up the narrow steps and into the dim interior of the bus.

The air inside was normal for the most part, if it wasn't for that same goddamn overpowering, humid smell that clung to your skin like fucking steam. The coppery stench of blood still lingered in your nostrils, as inescapable as your own shadow at this point. Old blood. Fresh blood. Yours. Theirs. You couldn't tell anymore. The scent was burned into your sinuses, and no amount of breathing through your mouth would drive it out. The mission had been brutal—though "mission" felt far too clean a word for whatever that slaughter had been.

How many times had you died? Three? Four? Maybe more. You didn't have time to process it after the second one as you were immediately thrust back into battle with no time to ask questions. All that remained was the sound—that sound—of the ticking. That infernal clockwork rhythm in your skull when Dante decided your job wasn't over. The burn of time reversing itself, rewinding your nerves, your bones, your self until you were whole again.

But what mattered is that it was over for today. What mattered, was that you could lay your head down and conk out so you could rest.

You half-stumbled, half-fell into your usual seat by the window, your body sagging against the cracked vinyl cushion like a puppet with its strings cut. You leaned your forehead against the cold glass, the temperature biting against your skin, and stared out into the endless sprawl of the City as it slithered by in streaks of neon. The lights out there—thin, distant—flickered like dying stars. And for a moment, you wondered if they'd go out entirely. If the City itself might finally sigh, shut its eyes, and sleep.

Across the aisle many of the others had similar ideas though in varying states of exhaustion and disrepair. Some were hunched over, elbows on knees, muttering to themselves. Others were completely laid out, limbs splayed in all directions out of pure exhaustion. No one spoke. No one looked at each other, not that you really blame them.

But your eyes drifted further past that.

Because unlike everyone else, one of you still hadn't sat down.

Don Quixote had remained on her feet since the moment you all staggered back aboard. She hadn't said a word—not even one of her usual grand declarations. There'd been no cries of joy to mark the end of the adventure. No gleeful recounting of exaggerated exploits in battle. Just pure silence as she paced about the bus.

Well less pacing and more... stalking than anything else. That was more accurate. She moved as if she was on a timer, tension making up every atom of her body as her shoes thudded softly against the floor with each pass. Up and down the aisle. Again and again. Like a caged animal in some too-small enclosure. Her fingers twitched at her sides, curling into fists before she forced them straight again. Then again. Then again.

And her eyes...

They never left her feet.

Rocinante was a mess. Those mangy, old running shoes that she was always so intent on never taking off, were now streaked with soot and dried gore. The left sole had begun to peel, torn and frayed, barely clinging to the shoe's body. Every time Don turned, she would pause at the end of the aisle, plant her feet, and stare down at them. As if seeing them in such a damaged state was physically hurting her.

Not like someone mourning a broken toy, she looked desperate.

It was the kind of look you'd seen in the eyes of someone who was unable to accept the situation they were put in. The look of someone trying to will something broken back into place through sheer force of need.

You watched her lips move—barely. Just a flicker of breath on her lower lip. Maybe she was whispering to them. Maybe to herself.

You weren't sure if it was the weariness or the dull panic in your chest, but your throat dried as you watched her make another loop down the aisle. Slower this time. Her steps dragged. Her shoulders were hunched forward slightly now. Each breath she took was shallow, her chest fluttering like a bird's.

"...Don?" you said. Your voice cracked. You didn't even mean to speak

aloud. "Are you okay?"

She stopped.

Not abruptly. No dramatic freeze. Just... a slow halting of movement, as though the gears in her spine had clicked into a new arrangement. She turned only her head, not her body, and looked at you from over her shoulder. Her eyes gleamed faintly in the low light of the cabin—darker than usual.

You regretted saying anything immediately.

She didn't respond, just stared at you. Like she wasn't sure who had spoken. Like she wasn't sure you were real.

Her back remained rigid, spine pulled taut like a bowstring about to snap. Her shoulders were raised unnaturally high, bunched up close to her ears—like hackles on a feral dog sensing the approach of something bigger than itself. She stood rooted to the floor, her fists clenched at her sides so tight her knuckles went pale beneath the grime.

When she finally spoke, her voice was brittle, forced through clenched teeth.

"O-of course, my dear comrade!" she barked out, far too loudly for the dead silence that clung to the bus cabin. "Fret thee not—I am in splendid condition, nary a scratch upon mine self!"

The words tumbled from her mouth like lines from a poorly rehearsed play, as though she were trying to remember the script in real time. Her voice lacked its usual cadence—the rolling, sweeping rhythm that always filled her speech with such impossible conviction. This wasn't bravado. It was panic wearing a mask of pageantry.

And then she laughed. A sharp, dry bark of a sound. Quick and empty like it had been yanked out of her throat by force and made itself heard just to give a message.

You frowned, watching her shoulders shake ever so slightly as she tried to draw herself taller.

"Are you sure?" you asked slowly, careful not to let your voice waver too much. "You're acting... off. We've had rough missions before, but you just seemed a little..."

For a split second, her posture wavered—like someone caught halfway between two thoughts.

Then her hand jerked downward. Her fingers clutched at her ankle—not her leg, but the high top of the shoe. Her grip latched onto the torn edge of Rocinante's left sole like she needed the contact to steady herself. You saw the subtle tremor in her arm, the twitch in her jaw. She winced, but not from pain. From what, then? Guilt? Shame?

"It is nothing!" she snapped, as quick as coherently possible. "Merely... merely a scratch upon rociante has doured my mood, that is all! I shall see to repairs in due time. 'Tis no matter worthy of concern!"

Her words spilled over themselves now, frantic in order to get you to drop the conversation. She tried to puff out her chest, to sound like the noble heroine she so desperately aspired to be. But it didn't hold. There was a tremor under her vowels—a crack in her consonants.

You stood up slowly, every muscle in your legs protesting the movement with dull, electric pain. But something in your chest hurt more. Everyone had their moments of personal strife, you're sure that as long as she knows that she has people to lean on it'll be fine.

"Don..." you said gently, taking a single step toward her.

That got her attention enough to stop the pacing instantly. She turned—just slightly. Just enough for the light above to catch the corner of her mouth.

You saw it.

A bright, dripping smear of crimson.

Slick and fluid, clinging to the edges of her lips like wine spilled down the side of a glass. A trace of blood trailed from the corner of her mouth to her chin, glistening faintly in the room. Her lips were parted just slightly, trembling with each breath she drew.

And it wasn't hers.

You knew that wasn't hers. You knew that blood wasn't coming from her own body. On this bus, you had learned the scent of suffering as well as you knew your own heartbeat. The blood on her lips wasn't from the battlefield. It wasn't dried from a wound or crusted from a

blow to the face. It was recent.

Your body froze just a couple steps away, breath caught in your throat like a fishhook.

She must have seen it—the shift in your face, the flash of horror that passed through your eyes—because her own expression snapped into motion. Her hands darted up, sleeve dragging across her face in a scared, frantic motion. She turned her back to you again, shoulders rising higher than before, as if trying to block your view with her own body.

"P-pay thee no heed!" she exclaimed. "'Tis but the remnants of a ghastly foe's demise! Ah, how they did... explode upon mine lance! Quite the mess, that! Ha... haha..."

The laugh didn't reach her eyes. It barely even made it out of her mouth. Just hit your ears and then sank, pitifully into the silence. What the hell was happening?

You could smell it now that you were close enough. She stunk of it even worse than you did, worse than anyone else on the bus. Like there was some invisible sheen of blood that was coating her entire body head to toe.

You could tell something was definitely very off, something was clawing at her. You could see it behind the shake in her hands. Behind the lines around her mouth. She was unraveling—trying to stitch herself back together, but this proximity was making it harder.

Because even as she turned away not to face you, her hands were shaking badly. Not just a faint tremor—this was full-bodied, marrow-deep, the kind of trembling that started somewhere beneath the skin and worked its way outward like a sickness. Yet, despite the severity of it, one hand still clung to Rocinante as if it were the only thing tethering her to reality. Her fingers curled so tightly around the torn leather that her knuckles blanched white, veins rising stark against her pale wrist.

You hesitated, glancing down again at the ruined edge of her shoe. The tear in Rocinante was worse than it looked before, the entire inside of the shoe was flayed open in one area, bits of thread dangling like veins that had been cut loose. The blood and soot had seeped deep into the seams, which seemed just one bad movement away from falling apart entirely.

"Is there," you said softly, trying not to spook her, "is there something wrong with your shoes? Are they broken?"

The effect was immediate.

"They are not broken!"

The words exploded from her like a gunshot. It wasn't just a denial—it was a defense, a threat. Her whole body jerked, like your question had struck her physically. Her voice cracked on the last syllable, the sound echoing off the bus walls like a snapped cable.

Every head on the bus turned. Even Vergilius, who hadn't so much as blinked during the mission, raised an eyebrow from his place at the front. The silence that followed her outburst was suffocating.

Don's eyes went wide as if she realized too late what she had done. She clapped a hand over her mouth—clearly more panicked at the attention that she was attracting than out of embarrassment.

Her whole frame quivered as she forced herself to breathe. Her chest rose and fell in jerky, uneven heaves, as if each breath scraped her throat raw. When she spoke again, her voice was lower. Quieter. But no less frantic. A sheen of sweat had gathered on her brow, glinting beneath her bangs.

"I... I meant..." she began haltingly, trying to reassemble the knightly mask that had shattered seconds ago. "'Tis naught but... minor damage. A trifle. Pray, forgive mine outburst. This... This day hath wearied me. As it hath all of us."

The apology sounded more scared than anything. She smoothed her coat with one trembling hand, still refusing to meet your eyes. You noticed she hadn't let go of Rocinante even once. Her fingers were digging into the shoe now, as if afraid you might try to take it from her.

There was something new in her gaze, now that you could see it so closely.

Her eyes, normally so full of purpose, now gleamed with something else. Her pupils twitched, shrinking and dilating like they couldn't decide how much light they needed. The yellow of her irises looked like it was panicking.

You took another slow, cautious step forward.

"Look," you said again, softer now, coaxing. "If there's something wrong—"

"Prithee, just... leave me be."

Not angry. Not desperate. Just final. A firm line drawn in the sand. Her shoulders squared, and she finally turned her body slightly away from you, as if shielding Rocinante from your gaze.

"I must... mend mine accoutrements," she said, and the waver in her voice almost seemed heartbreaking "Yes. Alone. A knight must tend her own armor, must she not? It would be most improper to... to sully thine hands with mine burdens."

There was something painful about the way she said it. A brittle attempt at dignity. You could see the tightness in her jaw, the way her teeth ground together behind her lips, as if she were chewing through shame just to keep the words coming.

Before you could say anything more—before you could stop her—she turned on her heel, letting go of her shoe only to grab her lance leaning on a nearby seat, and walked stiffly toward the backdoor corridor. The red-and-gold carpet muffled her steps, but not the stagger in them. Each footfall was uneven. Unbalanced

You watched her disappear into the corridor, her silhouette swallowed by the flickering light.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Thank you to a certain person for drawing my oc in a glue trap

<https://discord.gg/GPBNYYxExz>

Sleeping wasn't always the easiest thing when you worked for the LCB. Given this line of work there could be any great multitude of reasons that you wouldn't be able to get any shuteye.

This time though, not because of the ache in your muscles, the throbbing behind your eyes, the repeated deaths you had endured all of today. Not even because of the disgusting feeling taste of been drenched in blood that still hadn't left your mouth. No. You couldn't sleep because of the silence.

Because Don hadn't said a single word since slinking into her room.

Not one rambling ode to the Fixers of yore. Not one boisterous declaration of "glory well-earned!" after she went to go about her business. Not even the sound of Rocinante's worn soles thumping against the floor as she paced, as she always did when she was still brimming with energy after a fight.

You rolled onto your side, staring at the ceiling. The faint light of the City filtered through the narrow slats in your window, casting fractured shadows that danced with the rocking of the bus. Mephistopheles rumbled softly beneath you, but the familiar hum brought no comfort. It only made the emptiness more pronounced.

The corridor beyond was just nothing.

There was nothing. No muffled grumbling from another nearby room. No snoring. No breathing. Everything except the movement of the bus had gone still.

You sat up fully, heart thudding in your chest—not fast, but loud. Your hand reached for your coat without thinking. It felt like a ritual, something you had to do, like covering yourself would shield you from whatever force was causing this disturbance in your senses. Your fingers moved on their own, buttoning each clasp slowly.

You weren't sure what you were doing.

She said she was fine.

She'd snapped at you. Told you to leave her be.

And now? No sound. Not even the faint creak of her floorboards. You had to check. Just a glance. Just to be sure.

The hallway stretched before you like a tunnel. The deeper you moved into it, the less sound Mephistopheles seemed to make. The mechanical hum of the bus faded to a whisper. No vibration beneath your feet. It was like walking through a still frame.

Each step was as slow as you could manage. You kept to the edges of the velvet carpet, avoiding the parts that creaked near the center. Your shadow flickered along the wooden walls as you passed. Stanchions lined the corridor like ceremonial posts at a funeral. Each one cast a long, warped shadow that spilled out toward you like it was going to attack.

There's the door, just a little peak and you'll be gone.

It was already slightly ajar—only just. A sliver of dim lamplight leaked beneath it, stretching across the rug like a thin cut. The glow wasn't warm. It was rust-colored, like old blood seeping through gauze.

You crept closer, breath hitching. The silence was unbearable now. Not peaceful. Not tranquil. It was tense, there was nothing, why was it so empty? It watched you. Or felt like it did.

It's... humid.

A faint draft pressed against your face, sticky and warm. Blood.

New blood.

Stop.

Listen.

At first, it was just a faint squelch. Subtle. Rhythmic. Like wet hands kneading clay. Holding. Feeling. Something was mulling an object over, trying to understand it.

Then came the tearing.

Wet. Fibrous. Meaty. Like muscle being pulled from bone.

Then the sound of chewing. Loud, open-mouthed chewing. Not the slow savoring of a meal. Not the gentle crackle of crusted bread or the muted squish of fruit. This was ravenous. Desperate. Like something had broken past the barrier of reason and thrown itself into feast.

Something snapped—not like a twig, hollow on the inside, bone under pressure. A sharp crack that shot up your spine.

That's not her voice.

Even if It wasn't the triumphant cry of a knight. It wasn't the whimsical ramble of a woman living in fantasy. It wasn't her voice.

It was a whisper. Choked. Hoarse.

"Ahhh... h-hah...forgive me... thine marrow... doth melt upon mine tongue..."

You froze. Your legs locked, every muscle suddenly aware of its fragility as it was suddenly drawn to dead still. Your stomach twisted, pulled into knots that told you this was not a place you wanted to be.

You couldn't move.

You couldn't look away.

You leaned closer. Slowly. You didn't want to.

"O delectable flesh," she gasped, a sob curling under the words, "forgive thy bearer's... sacrifice... but I—I—I cannot halt mine wicked craving..."

The last few words came out slurred, bubbling over something in her mouth.

Her voice cracked on the word "wicked." Broke. Splintered like porcelain. You'd never heard Don speak like that. Never heard her beg like that.

There was another crunch. Deeper. Resonant. Followed by a shuddering moan—a sound of both ecstasy. A full gulp followed, and something slid across the floor inside the room with a slick drag, like flesh unspooling from the bone.

Gnawing. Sucking. The tearing of skin from sinew. And her voice—mumbling, praying, apologizing through mouthfuls of meat.

You widened the door just a hair more, breath caught tight in your throat. Breathing finally gives you the clarity to realize that inside, the room absolutely reeked.

The dim, guttering light from a single desk lamp flickered with a sickly orange hue, barely holding the dark at bay. It cast long, swaying shadows across the walls—shadows that trembled as if afraid to witness what was happening.

The room, once cluttered with cheerful disorder, was now desecrated. Fixer paraphernalia hung limply from the walls: posters of famed Associations were torn, soaked through with arterial spray. Pins and medals were scattered across the floor, submerged in pools of half-coagulated blood. Plushies—little mascots of Fixers past—lay twisted, stuffed guts torn and stained. A once beloved display case had been knocked over, glass shattered in a starburst pattern, one of its shelves embedded in the wall like a knife.

Her LCB-issued coat lay discarded in a heap in the corner, soaked and crumpled like something shed in pure desperation. A trail of blood led away from it. Wrappers, shredded blood packs, surgical tubing—all littered the floor like the remnants of a battlefield turned feeding ground.

And there, in the corner beneath the shuttered window, nestled in the grave of her ruined memorabilia, was Don. Curled like a beast, hunched low as each individual vertebrae of her spine bulged from her shirt..

She clutched it—that thing—to her face like a starving animal might cradle a last scrap of food.

A human arm.

The sleeve had once been a pressed suit, now shredded and clotted with gore. Flesh had been torn in jagged strips from the elbow down, exposing purpled muscle, ribboned sinew, and even the slight pale of bone. The hand drooped lifelessly, almost completely torn off at the wrist where the fingers curled as if still trying to grasp some kind of salvation in its final moment. The stump was a mangled ruin—crimson muscle blooming like petals.

Don's mouth worked frantically at the upper arm, teeth sawing through tendon and fat in uneven, panicked bites. Her jaw clicked with each chew. She wasn't savoring it—she wasn't even tasting it. She was trying to drink through it, suck it dry, trying to tear deeper

and deeper to find more blood where there was none left.

Her lips and chin were slick with red. Her face was smeared, stained like a butcher's apron. Blood ran down her neck, beading along her collarbone and soaking into the plain white of her undershirt.

She was whimpering—tiny, pitiful sounds—between each bite. Like the act hurt her more than it sustained her.

"Rocinante..." she gasped, her voice warbling. Her fingers spasmed around the limb, knuckles white. "I beg thee... do not take this burden from me again... please come back to me..."

She paused, trembling. A sob tore through her throat, half-choked on the chunk of flesh she'd bitten off. She forced it down anyway. Her whole body shook as she swallowed, like the guilt was as thick as the meat she consumed.

"I am... I am not strong... Not without thee..."

Another harsh chomp. Her molars split a tendon with a sickening snap. Her jaw clenched so hard you heard it grind.

"I wouldst forsake all honor... all Fixerdom... if it meant I need not feast thusly..."

Her voice cracked, suddenly loud, echoing off the walls in a burst of pain that didn't sound human.

"What madness is this...?" she rasped. "What monstrous craving hath taken roost within mine breast...? I—I wouldst gouge out mine own eyes ere I drink from another again... and yet..."

Another bite.

A brutal rip of flesh, veins flinging droplets across the desk and floor. A soft plop of torn muscle falling loose. She shuddered violently, barely even able to get the words out.

"Yet I cannot halt... Cannot resist..." she whispered, her voice high and strained. "The thirst... the thirst... it beseecheth me... Rocinante..."

She chewed slower now, teeth gnashing mindlessly, like her body had overruled her mind entirely. Her eyes—those once bright, hazel irises full of childish wonder—were glassy and distant, rimmed with red. They swam unfocused in their sockets, ringed with dark bruising,

staring through the half-severed limb like it were a lifeline.

Tears mixed with the blood on her face, carving pale rivers down her cheeks.

"Forgive me... sweet vessel..." she mumbled, barely coherent. "Thou who once laughed and bled and breathed..."

She kissed the stump like a penitent at prayer, lips quivering.

"I am unworthy... to speak thy name... but thy ichor... thy gift... hath become mine only solace..."

She pulled the arm tighter against herself, burying her face into it again, muffling a desperate sob as she resumed feeding. You saw her shoulders convulse with every bite. Every swallow. Her throat jumped. Her body betrayed itself with every motion—seeming to feel nothing but pure remorse at the indulgence she was offering herself.

It clearly was much more than just hunger.

It was survival. It was shame.

And it was so, so much older than her.

Her head lolled against the ruined limb like a child clinging to a ragged comforter, her breath shallow and fast. Her blood-slicked lips parted in a quiet murmur, dreamy and slurred.

"How... how long... hast it been since I tasted such heat...?"

The words floated from her mouth like a memory, not quite spoken to the arm, not quite spoken to herself. A soft, fragile laugh followed—barely more than a sigh.

"Ah... but thou art not he..." Her voice curled in on itself, hushed and broken. "Nay... thou art whole. Fresh. Living, once..."

She dragged her tongue slowly across the inside of the elbow, shuddering as the faintest vestiges of warmth met her tongue. Her eyes fluttered, lashes trembling.

"I—I wouldst... nay, shouldst... cast myself into the chasm of damnation... if it spared thee this fate..."

You stood frozen in the doorway. You couldn't breathe. Couldn't blink. Couldn't think. What could you possibly do about something

like this? You didn't even know whose arm that was.

Maybe it was uh... maybe it was just from today's mission right? Some random backstreet vagrant that she snagged an arm from. But even then... why was she...

But even as your mind screamed to make sense of it, she kept going. Still she fed. Still she spoke. Her lips moved in frantic prayer with every bite, as though words alone could absolve her of what her body refused to stop doing.

"Rocinante... Rociante..." she whispered shakily, cradling her knees as her face hovered inches above the shredded limb. "Thou didst... not abandon me... thou wilt return to me..."

A jagged sob rattled her lungs.

"Prithee, return to me. Bereft of thy yoke... I—I canst no longer remember what it felt like to be clean..."

Her mouth twisted as she choked back another breathless cry. Her face crumpled as she pressed it deeper into the cooling meat of the limb, hiding from the room, from the world, from herself.

"I—I do not want to become a monster..." she whispered, barely audible beneath her gasps.

Then, quieter still—

"I—"

Something caught in your throat. A breath. A sound. Something you hadn't meant to let slip.

And the moment it did—

She froze.

The arm slipped from her fingers like a dropped weapon, hitting her lap with a grotesque slap. Her shoulders jerked upward, every fiber in her trembling frame locking as though gripped by a noose. She didn't look at you. Didn't move. You could feel the horror radiating off of her in waves, pulsing like heat from a fire.

"Don," you said again, barely able to form the word.

You stepped past the threshold, your shadow stretching across the

floor. The soft lamplight flickered.

"Don... what are you doing? Are you—"

"N-Nay—!"

Her voice gushed out at the wall, sharp and high and filled with a terrible panic. She curled in on herself with a frantic whimper, arms thrown over her head, the sleeve of her ruined shirt slipping down to reveal a lattice of crimson bruises and blood smears.

"Pray... do not look upon me!" she pleaded, voice rising to a sob. "Not like this... prithee not like this!"

She shrank from your voice like it burned her. She tried to shield her face, her body—curling up smaller, smaller still, as though she believed she could disappear into the carpet if she only hid hard enough. Her breath hitched violently, coming in short, broken gasps.

"I did not wish for thee to see..." she whispered, fingers curling around the edges of her scalp like she wanted to claw herself apart. "I—I tried to resist! Truly! I I didst not mean for any of it to happen!"

Tears spilled freely down her cheeks now, mixing with the blood already smeared across her face.

"But I—I am so hungry... It gnaws, it gnaws, it hurts..."

She clenched her teeth, grinding them audibly. Her body convulsed again, not in hunger this time, but in anguish. Her knees pulled tighter to her chest, her shoulders trembling with silent sobs.

"I did not want this... I did not choose this..."

Her voice was so small now. So raw.

"I wanted to be good."

She shook her head over and over like it would undo everything.

"I wanted to be like the Fixers in mine books. Strong. Noble. Just. And yet—!" Her breath hitched. "And yet here I crouch, devouring the innocent, a craven beast in knight's attire..."

She hiccupped, and her next words were barely audible, buried in her sleeve:

"Dost thou hate me now...?"

You didn't answer, you just listened to the sound of her breathing—harsh, ragged, like each inhale scraped the inside of her ribs.

Then, slowly, trembling like the hands of a broken clock, she peeked up from behind her stained forearm.

Her face was a canvas of ruin.

Blood caked from cheek to chin in erratic streaks, dried at the edges but fresh around her mouth. Crimson stained her teeth, glistened on her lips, and painted her neck in splatters where it had dripped. Her jaw trembled. She didn't try to hide it.

And her eyes—

They were glassy, wide, as if caught in a dream she couldn't wake from. Tears clung to her lashes, fat and unshaken, and spilled freely in silence.

"Ah..." she breathed, her voice threadbare. "Sweet... companion..."

She gave a tiny, mirthless laugh. It caught in her throat like a splinter.

"You shan't even grace me with an answer... is that how cursed a visage I present thee with...?"

Her gaze dropped, a fresh tear splashing against the pale of her shirt.

"What foul... ignoble wretch am I...?"

You didn't trust your voice, but her name left your lips anyway. Taking a small step closer as you tried to placate her.

"Don..."

She flinched as though struck. A full-body jolt of panic tore through her. She scrambled backward until her spine hit the wall with a muffled thud, her palms smearing red across the floor in her wake.

"Nay, nay, nay—" Her voice broke. "Come not closer—I beg thee!"

She curled in tighter, arms clamped over her chest like she feared her body might burst apart. The whites of her eyes were stark against the red, wide and wild and swimming with guilt.

"I did not mean it," she sobbed, voice rising and falling with each desperate breath. "I swear it upon mine name, upon my name as Don Quixote, I DID NOT MEAN TO DO IT!"

The words came faster and faster, tangled in gasps, her chest heaving beneath the thin, blood-dampened fabric of her undershirt.

"He was already gone," she choked out, clutching at her temple with one shaking hand, as if trying to steady the memory. "He was—I found him—a corpse! Cold and still, alone and forgotten in the rubble!"

Her voice cracked higher, shriller, on the next line:

"Bereft of voice and warmth! And I—I thought—!"

She clamped her hand over her mouth mid-sentence, eyes squeezing shut. Her breath hitched. She hiccupped once, violently, and smeared the blood across her face further as she wiped her lips with the back of her trembling hand.

"I knew it was vile... I knew!" she rasped. "But the craving—th-the thirst—it... it gnawed at mine thoughts like a terrible worm!"

Her voice broke again, then again, splintering into sobs that dragged up from her throat like dry heaves.

"I couldst not... I—I couldst not resist!"

She dropped her head back against the wall with a dull thump. Her hair clung to the blood on her neck. Her whole body sagged with the weight of her confession, like her bones were liquid inside her skin.

"Oh stars above..." she whispered.

Her hand slid away from her face, fingers twitching in the air like a broken puppet's.

"I have fallen," she murmured, eyes glassy and unseeing. "Fallen far from glory... and from thee..."

She didn't move. Just stayed there, trembling, knees hugged to her chest, arms slack with exhaustion and shame.

You knelt.

You didn't know why. Your heart was still hammering, your limbs still screaming to run. But you knelt, because even amid the horror—even

in the blood and broken glass—she looked so small.

Not like a monster.

Not even like a knight.

Just... her.

Chapter 3

That's who was staring back at you. A girl who once had a too-bright shine in her eyes, sobbing into her hands, begging for forgiveness from a world that no longer matched the stories she tells herself.

"Don. I believe you," you said softly, the words barely leaving your lips. "I do. Just... talk to me. What is this? What's happening to you?"

She stared at you.

Her body was hunched, still cradled in blood and shame, but her eyes—those bright, impossibly red eyes—locked with yours. Wide. Shimmering. Guilty.

You watched her lower lip tremble, a flutter like the wing of a dying moth. Her hands twitched against the floor, twitching in tiny spasms, soaked past the elbows in blood that wasn't hers. Nails scraped against the tacky mess, digging grooves through it unconsciously, like she was trying to burrow into the floor and vanish.

"I..." Her voice wavered like the last light of a dying filament. "I did not... I did not wish for thee to see me so..."

She looked down, and her body trembled.

"I was just hungry," she whispered.

Then louder, more forcefully—though no less broken:

"That is all that it was..."

Her arm jerked out, gesturing wildly to the carnage around her. To the glistening pile of blood packs slumped like deflated organs. To the half-devoured limb sprawled across her knees. To the crimson soaking through the knees of her trousers, painting her all over in splatters.

"I—I am..." Her breath caught. She grasped for the words, but they died in her throat. Her mouth hung open for a moment longer, as if sound might still escape.

She grabbed at her own skull, fingers tangling in her matted hair, nails dragging against her scalp as though trying to claw the thoughts out.

"I am sorry..." she choked, voice splintering. "I just..."

But she didn't finish.

You waited, your heart thundering in your chest, watching her crumble from some untouchable optimist into something so very human. Someone who felt all the same emotions that you did.

"I can help you," you said at last, gently. "Whatever this is, whatever's happening—we can figure it out. You just—"

"NAY!"

Pure unfettered terror. Her eyes went wide, her entire frame seized, and she pulled her bloodied hands against her chest like they were weapons she feared she might use.

"I am sickened!" she cried, the word shrill with revulsion. "Sickened by a thirst most foul! Sickened to even be near you at this very moment!"

She gasped between the words, clutching at her chest like it hurt to speak them.

"It... it lives within me now," she hissed, voice hoarse. "It doth whisper behind mine eyes—sing, when it doth scent thy wounds..."

Her fingers twitched again, spasming as if the hunger itself danced through her nerves.

"Ever since I lost mine steed... Ever since Rocinante was rent asunder in that cursed fray..."

She let out a ragged sound—half sob, half laugh—and clutched her chest, bloodied fists trembling over her heart.

"I hath tried," she whimpered. "I hath tried to endure... to abstain... to be worthy of the title 'Fixer,' of the faith thou placed in me—!"

The bitterness in her voice cracked like ice.

She looked up then.

Truly looked at you.

Her gaze burned.

Not with fury, not with madness—but with anguish. With the unbearable weight of someone trying to peel their soul out of a body they no longer recognized.

"Wouldst thou..." she asked, voice barely audible, "Wouldst thou think me... unworthy now?"

You opened your mouth.

But nothing came out.

Because you didn't know. Because her face—so usually aglow with bravado and childish pride—was raw. Stripped of all its armor. And beneath it was nothing but a frightened woman staring down the barrel of her own monstrous reflection.

And then she moved.

Just a little.

Crawling forward a few inches. Hands sinking into the blood-slick floor with a squelch, trembling so violently they looked like they might collapse under her.

"Please..." she whispered.

It was the kind of plea that clawed at your chest.

"Do not flee," she begged. "I know I—I am an unholy creature now... but I..."

Her breath caught again. Her arms quivered.

"I need thee..."

And the way she said it—

Like it was the last truth she had left.

She extended her hands toward you, palms up, open—not demanding. Pleading. They shook so fiercely you were afraid her fingers might snap.

"Just..." she breathed. "Just come closer..."

Her lips parted. Her teeth bloodstained, her cheeks hollow from shame.

Quieter now. A whisper only for you.

"I doth swear... upon all that is just..."

Her eyes watered again, wide and begging.

"I shan't harm thee. I... I could never."

The moment you reached out yourself however she was on you immediately. Your breath caught in your chest as she clung to you—no, latched onto you so brutally that you thought she had broken every bone in your body.

Her fingers dug into your sleeves, blood-slick and trembling, but they were strong. Far stronger than you expected. Far stronger than anything human had the right to be. The moment your skin met hers, she seized you like a drowning woman seizing a rope. There was no grace, no careful motion—just the need to hold something close to her.

You gasped as she pulled you forward, and the wet floor gave way beneath your boots. You fell the rest of the way into her with a grunt, your knees hitting the slick carpet as you sank down all the way to the floor. Her arms snapped shut around you, unbreakable like a vice.

It wasn't pain that stopped you from pulling away.

It was fear.

You could feel her muscles, coiled and trembling under that sanguine blessed skin. Her limbs shook, but her grip did not loosen—it only grew tighter. Just enough that you knew, with a creeping certainty, that if she wanted to, she could collapse your entire body in on itself without effort.

And still, her voice was breaking.

"Forgive me... forgive me forgive me forgive me—" she whimpered, the words tumbling out in a frantic spiral. "I didn't mean to—I didn't—I—I did not want to eat him! I—I only wanted a drop! But he... he was already cold—I thought—"

Her arms trembled violently, as if each word peeled more flesh from her soul.

"I did not want to tear," she sobbed. "I did not want to be a beast!"

Her head dropped forward and pressed itself into the crook of your neck. You stiffened instantly, every instinct in your body screaming danger, your breath frozen, your hands hovering helplessly in the air

like broken wings.

Her breath ghosted over your collar. Hot. Damp. Too close.

Then came her mouth—open.

You felt the faint drag of her teeth brush against the soft part of your neck. It was so close that every muscle in your spine locked.

But she didn't bite.

She didn't even press down. She just... stayed there, as close as she could possibly be to you.

Clung to you like she was trying to climb out of her own skin and bury herself in yours.

You could feel her chest hitch with every breath, every sob. Her heartbeat thundered against your ribs. Her body was cold, feverish, soaked in blood but shivering like a fever dream.

"Th-The craving..." she breathed, the words barely coherent. "It... it howleth within me, like a beast imprisoned 'neath my ribs—like the storm-winds through hollow bones... it sings to me, and the scent of thee—"

She inhaled as deeply as she could, absorbing every scent particle available to her.

A long, shaking breath pulled in right against your throat. You felt her nose press to your skin, felt the twitch of her lips just above your pulse.

She shuddered.

A low sound escaped her throat. Somewhere between a moan and a whimper.

"Oh... thou reeketh of it," she whispered, voice thick and wet with hunger. "So rich, so warm, so alive..."

Her arms cinched around your waist tighter. You flinched, but she didn't let go.

"I wouldst not bite," she whispered. "I swore it—I swore it, dear friend, sweet companion—do not recoil, please!"

You could feel her salivating. Her breath was rapid now, ragged, as if she were choking on her own thirst.

"I am not a monster—I—I am not! I am... Don Quixote—e-errant knight... and..."

She pressed closer, pressing her forehead to your neck like it might purge the hunger from her skull.

"And... I... you smell just like him..." Her voice faltered. "Like the same lies just a paper thin layer away, just beyond mine sight..."

Tears hit your collarbone. Warm. Fresh.

"I would never harm thee. Never. Even now, as I shake and shiver and suffer, I will not draw thy blood..."

Another breath. Another agonized inhale against your skin.

"...But I want to."

That truth broke her.

You felt it—like glass fracturing inside her chest.

"I want to," she whispered, as if admitting it aloud was the worst blasphemy she could conceive of. "I want it more than anything. But not from thee. Never from thee."

Her fingers curled in the back of your shirt, fists tightening until the fabric strained.

"Stay," she breathed, so softly you almost missed it. "Stay until it passeth... just until this... thing inside me quiets. I... I am afraid. I am so terribly afraid..."

And then, with the barest hint of hope—

"...Will thee stay?"

She pulled back—just enough.

Her hands remained tight around you, but her face shifted, rising from where it had trembled against your neck. The dim lamplight caught on the streaks across her cheeks—tears, blood, flecks of torn flesh still clinging beneath her eyes like red lace. Her lips quivered, stained to black-red with dried ichor, and her breath came in short, shallow

gasps.

But her eyes...

Gods.

Those radiant, cursed crimson eyes.

They glistened, wide and delirious—swimming with so much. Regret. Hunger. Terror. A child's shame in a sinner's shell.

"But I have..." she began, voice like fraying cloth. "I have hurt thee, haven't I...?"

Her words came slow and uncertain, as if tasting each one before letting it fall.

"Not thy flesh... nay... but thy faith. Thy trust in me..."

One trembling hand rose and pressed against her chest, over her heart. You could feel it, even through the thin blood-wet fabric—hammering like a frightened bird in a cage.

"A knight who draweth her blade 'gainst her kin..." she murmured, "... is no knight at all. She is a brigand. A beast. A wretch."

Her hand curled into a fist over her heart, nails biting into her own ribs.

"I—I am unworthy of thine gaze..."

Then suddenly—violently—she seized your shoulders.

Her grip was no longer pleading.

She yanked you closer, your legs sliding across the sticky floor until your thighs bumped against hers. You were practically seated in her lap now, and her arms crushed you to her with terrifying strength. Her breath hitched, her nose brushing yours, so close you could feel the shiver of her lips when she whispered:

"But tell me..."

Her eyes locked with yours—wide, trembling, burning.

"I beseech thee... you have yet to answer..."

Her hands clenched tighter.

"Do I frighten thee now?"

You opened your mouth, heart pounding, breath trembling in your lungs. You weren't thinking—you couldn't think—not with the heat of her skin pressed against yours, not with the blood clinging to her breath, not with that wild look behind her eyes. And still, you heard yourself say:

"I—no, I mean—I forgive you, okay? I do. I—just let go, please..."

There was a pause.

And then—

"Thou forgivest me?"

She repeated it like she was tasting something awful.

"Thou... truly... speaketh that word?" Her voice cracked. "For me?"

You nodded. Hands trembling at her shoulders.

"Yes. I forgive you, Don. I just... I just want you to calm down. Please."

You expected her to exhale.

To sag.

To cry in relief.

But she didn't.

She began to shake.

Harder than before. Not from cold. Not from weakness. From something deep. Deep and terrible.

"No... oh no..." she whispered. "Oh no no no no—thou shouldst not have said that—!"

She released your shoulders—not to let you go, but to seize herself. Her fingers curled into her cheeks, nails digging hard enough to draw new blood. Her face contorted into something twisted—shame and horror all at once.

"How dare I be forgiven!?" she wailed. "How dare I accept thy mercy with teeth still wet!?"

She sobbed—a jagged, raw sound—and slammed her head forward into your chest with the force of someone seeking punishment. The weight of her brow against you was heavy. Shaking. You tried to lift a hand in comfort, but her arms surged around you again.

Stronger this time.

One arm locked around your side, dragging you closer. The other clawed weakly at your back, fingers curling like a child trying to stop the world from pulling them under.

"I am a monster," she cried, breath ragged against your skin. "A demon, wearing a Fixer's cloak—a parody of justice, cursed with thirst and folly and pride! And now—now thou pitiest me?!"

Her voice hitched again.

"Pity! What crueler blade could pierce my heart than thine mercy?"

She buried her face against you again—no longer pressing her lips to your neck, but still inhaling deep. You felt it—her whole body quiver against you as she breathed you in like a starving woman before a feast.

"Thy blood..." she whispered. "It singeth, o stars above, it singeth to me like the morning sun... and I—I want it!"

The admission tore out of her like a scream strangled into a whisper.

"I want it, I want thee, and I hate myself for it!"

You felt her mouth tremble near your throat again.

"For wanting thee..."

She trembled in your arms.

And clung tighter still.

And her sobs—gods, her sobs were like nothing human.

They tore through her in uneven waves, scraping up from the hollow pit of her chest, as though her soul was caught in her throat and couldn't escape. Broken, shattered sounds, too loud for her small body

to contain. Her entire frame shook with them—thin shoulders hitching, ribs stuttering under the weight of her breaths.

"F-Forgiveness..." she gasped, as if the word burned her throat.
"From... from thee..."

She said it like it was venom—like your mercy had bitten her.

"A creature so foul, so base, so... ruined as I..." she choked, the blood on her chin now smeared across her lips as she talked. "To receive mercy...?"

Her head jerked side to side, violently, as if she could physically reject the idea—hair clinging to her tear-drenched cheeks like strings of oil-drenched moss.

"Nay... Nay, 'tis wrong—blasphemous!"

Her voice cracked like ice underfoot.

"Thou shouldst have condemned me! Cast me down! Spurned me as the wretched fiend I have become!"

Her hands rose again—gripping your arms now, sliding up to your shoulders. Blood smeared across the fabric of your uniform in great, long streaks. She didn't even seem to notice. Or maybe she did, and it only drove the guilt deeper into her skin.

"I shouldst have been judged!" she cried. "Struck! Berated! Let thy hatred fall upon me, that I might feel justice! That I might know that my penance is earned!"

You winced at the force in her hands—how tight she gripped you, how her voice pierced through your chest like a pike.

"Don..." you tried to speak. But your words were thin. Brittle. Like trying to calm a storm with a whisper.

And she recoiled at even that.

"No!" she shrieked, and her body jerked backward, rocking on her knees. "No, no, do not speak such gentle words to me! I—I cannot—I cannot bear it!"

She pressed both palms hard against her temples now, fingers trembling, smearing blood through her hair and across her face. It dripped in long streaks down her jaw, catching on her chin before

falling to her lap.

"Thou wouldst forgive me..." she croaked. "Even after what I have done..."

She let out a bitter, broken laugh.

It wasn't her usual manic cackle.

It was low. Soft.

"I—I tore a man asunder... like he were naught but meat... and still... still thou callest me friend..."

Her eyes rose to meet yours again.

And something in them changed.

The tears still fell. The pain was still there—worse, even—but something else stirred behind her bloodshot gaze.

Her eyes locked on your neck.

Your shoulder.

Your chest.

Your blood.

"I do not deserve it..." she whispered, as if each syllable cost her another piece of herself. "I do not deserve such grace."

Her hand moved toward you again, fingertips twitching as they grazed your sleeve.

"This..." she whispered, reverently. "This kindness... this is no mercy..."

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Subpar editing cause I'm tired no beta we die like my tremor team

The fifth chap will be a seperate and unrelated LCE sancho chap as a bonus but it'll be a bit

Thanks

How long had she been staring at you like that. Red eyes seeming like they were trying to tell you something, something different from the words gracing your ears. A dreadful, aching different.

You already knew something was wrong

You barely had time to gasp as her hand snapped to your face, palm smothering your mouth before you could scream, her other arm wrapping around your back to pull you down into her.

Cavernous maw stretching wide open, viscous strands of crimson tinged saliva dripping away to reveal those jagged, ravenous teeth. Jaw clenching like she wanted to stop but it opened wider till it could no longer.

Snapping down those fangs sank into your shoulder with no hesitation. No grace. No control. They just wanted to dig into something, to hold company as they held something other than empty need.

It wasn't a clean bite—it was a tear, a ripping, the kind of pain that set your vision swimming and your limbs flailing. You screamed into her hand, legs kicking wildly as you felt flesh give way, felt her teeth slice further down until everything it could touch gave way beneath the pressure.

Blood poured hot down your side—so much blood, enough to completely soak through any clean parts of your uniform in seconds, making your vision blur with the sheer force of pain. Each terrified beat was another splurt of life as it clawed its way to the surface, given an outlet where there should be none.

Her grip tightened further in response to your struggling, you were trying to get away from her. You would leave her alone to fend

against this disease alone. So she squeezed down harder and harder, like chains around your body, crushing, starving.

"Prithee... I'm sorry—I'm sorry—I'm so sorry—!" she wailed between mouthfuls, muffled by the way her lips pressed to the torn meat of your shoulder. She was almost choking between the contents in her throat and the desperate gasping wails she was emitting.

"I tried! I swear it upon my name! I did not want to—I didn't want to do this!"

But she didn't stop.

Every movement of her mouth sent new lightning bolts of pain through your nerves. Her fangs tore through layers of muscle, tugged and gnawed, and your whole body convulsed against her.

She cradled you like something sacred even as she fed like she was destined to be damned all the same, like she had nothing to lose and would indulge until someone else would stop her.

"I—I thought I could resist... for thee... for thee..." she sobbed. "But thou art so close, so very small and red!"

She lifted her mouth for only a moment—face completely drenched in red now, painted in your blood. Her tongue flicked out over her lips, trembling as it caught a rivulet trailing down her chin, only to slurp it back up into her mouth before heaving wide to take in another shuddering breath.

And then she whispered again:

"I am so sorry... Please... forgive me... again... even now..."

Then her head dipped once more.

And the pain returned anew.

Her voice was thick with tears, choked and ragged, barely words at all as they spilled past lips still wet with your blood.

"It sings to me," she wept, chewing as she spoke. "It calleth unto me—beseeches me—and I... I hate it—I detest myself—!"

You could feel her jaw grinding against your mangled shoulder, the serration of her teeth shearing through meat with no rhythm, no precision. It was an attempt at butchery, to draw as much food in the

shortest amount of time as possible. To dig deep a geyser for the delicious forbidden reserves, buried so painfully deep below that beautiful skin.

You felt every pull of her mouth, every awful drag of teeth splitting muscle, each tremble of her lips before she bit again. Every time her jaw locked down, it sent a fresh pulse of white-hot agony ripping up your spine.

You bucked against her—your body acting on panic alone—legs spasming, fingers clawing at her coat, your vision swimming in gray at the edges.

Her hand remained clamped over your mouth, iron-hard, knuckles pressed so tightly to your face she might shatter your jaw if she wasn't careful.

You could taste the blood in your own mouth now—not hers, not the body she'd taken apart, but yours. Your scream had forced itself upward so hard, so violently, it had split something in your throat. The copper tang filled your sinuses. You gagged on it, as you tried desperately to dispel the gathering fluid.

"I'm sorry—" she sobbed, mouth half-full, "I'm so sorry—I know—I know! I am guilty—I am filth—but I'm so... so hungry!"

Her dark red tears dripped hot onto your bare neck, mixing with the blood and sweat already smeared across your skin. You could feel her trembling—every part of her was shuddering violently, from her shoulders to her ribs to the desperate clench of her thighs around your lap.

One hand still muffled your mouth, keeping you quiet. The other had moved to your jaw, her slender fingers digging bruises into your cheek, forcing your head still as her face leaned in, as her teeth sank again—

"Please..." she gasped, her voice barely human now, trembling and hoarse. "Please... do not hate me... I—I will mend this—I shall atone, I swear it upon every name I've ever carried! I shall make this right! Just—just let me—let me taste thee—just a little longer—!"

The blood was everywhere.

It drenched you both—your back soaked through, your uniform clinging to your skin like wet bandages. It had mixed with the

remaining spill of the previous victim, pooled beneath you in a sticky, dark halo. It ran in rivulets down her arms, her neck, painting her in your warmth like warpaint.

"Thou..." she murmured, mouth brushing your skin again, trembling. "Thou art warm... so warm..."

Her tone had fallen into something else now. Delirious. Worshipful. A soft, reverent whisper barely shaped like language.

"And yet... thou forgavest me..." she said, eyes fluttering shut. "Still thou callest me... comrade..."

She pulled back—not far—but just enough to press her forehead to the ruin of your shoulder, her nose nuzzled into the mess she had made.

Her breathing was ragged. Her lips still glistened with your blood.

"I am monstrous..." she whispered. "I am forsaken... and yet..."

A hiccup.

A sob that died in her throat.

"Thou forgave me... thou wouldst forgive me... again... and again..."

She let go of your jaw—only to wrap her arms around you again, tighter than before. You wheezed, the pressure on your ribs unbearable. She was so small, but her strength was not human. You spat up whatever parts of the foul mixture of internal fluids you could, viscera leaking down over your mouth as you wretched for air.

She held you like a drowning soul clinging to a float. She pressed your ruined body against hers, her chin to your clavicle, her face buried in your throat. You could feel the vibration of her words through her chest. But even as you both seemed at the end of your rope she attempted to comfort you, patting your back in a placating gesture, as if it could help clear your throat.

"Please..." she whimpered. "Stay with me... Just a moment longer... Just a little longer..."

And then she began to rock. Slowly. Back and forth. Like she was gently caressing a dolly in her hands. Like someone who had just taken their own guilt in their arms and was trying to sing it to sleep.

But that was not an answer to the terrible biting pain that ran through

your body. You kicked still, you fought. Your arms flailed and pounded weakly against her sides. Your fingers clawed at her collar, her shirt, her skin.

You screamed into her body—until you could not utter more than wet, broken gasps. Till not even full breaths could come out, spittle and blood with remnants of whispers in them.

But no matter what you did, it changed nothing.

Don cradled you in her lap like a lover, like someone who knew she had damned herself but couldn't bear to let go of the sin that was causing her so much pain.

Her teeth returned, hungrily. Aimless. She was too deep in it, too lost. She bit wherever her lips touched—your shoulder again, your upper arm, the curve of your neck.

Her mouth tore your skin. Her tongue searched your wounds for as much filling as it could pull out from that rapidly draining reservoir.

Her lips murmured through red:

"Forgive me... forgive me... forgive me..."

Your blood soaked her from collar to boots—thick rivulets crawling down the stiff linen of her uniform like vines, painting her chest, her sleeves, her waist. Your blood. Hot and fresh, painting her salvation in a red she would never be clean of again.

Her hands were red to the wrist, her palms slick with gore. She had smeared it across your face, your arms, your chest in the chaos of her grip. You tried to push her away again, your hands slipping over the wet fabric of her shirt—but she didn't even flinch. Instead she gripped one by the wrist, pulling it up to layer it across with kisses.

Your shoulder screamed with pain as she took hold of your arm. Your nerves were shredded, your skin flayed open, the flesh of your upper body reduced to something you couldn't even recognize by sensation anymore. Every brush of her breath over the ruined muscle sent you twitching, spasming in pain beneath her grasp.

"I know..." she whispered. "I know what I'm doing is wicked..."

Her lips brushed your ear as she spoke, trembling with each syllable. "I know this is monstrous, foul... a sin no vow of penance could

absolve... and yet..."

She shuddered, her forehead pressing against your temple as her mouth moved lower again.

"...I do it still... I do it still..."

Your breath hitched. Your lips parted. A disgusting, pathetic gurgle was all you could manage. Whatever recognizable parts that could be understood came out messy.

"Don... please..."

She froze, mid-motion, her fangs hovering over your skin like a blade held at the throat. Her entire frame went stiff. Her chest stopped rising. Her fingers twitched around your ribs.

And then—slowly, gently—she pulled her face back just enough to look at you.

"Thou..." she breathed, her voice barely sound. "...thou speaketh still...?"

A fragile, broken smile quivered across her face, twitching beneath the weight of her guilt.

"Even now... thy breath... it comes for me... not in curses? Not in hatred?"

She let out a laugh.

A horrible, wet thing. Shaky. Hysterical.

"Too kind... too kind for this cruel world..." she whispered. "I—I should be reviled. Spurned. Cast down. Yet thou... beseechest me still...?"

Her body trembled harder, and the tears came faster now. They carved pale pink rivers down her bloodstained skin, dripping onto your face as she clutched you tighter to her chest.

"Wouldst thou truly... still forgive me? Even now? Even as I..."

Her voice broke entirely.

"...as I feast upon thee like carrion...?"

And then—without waiting for an answer—she lunged again.

This time her mouth closed around your bicep—no hesitation, no pause—and her teeth punched through with a sickening pop. Muscle split beneath her fangs, tendon snapping with a sound like splitting rope.

At some point you had stopped fighting back entirely, no more did you slam your fists into her shoulders, into her neck, her head. You laid there, completely and entirely limp, any attempts at preserving your life half hearted at best.

And she cried as she ate.

"To see me like this... and stay... to offer me thy throat, thy tears, thy voice... is this not... is this not love?" she whispered. "Is this not... what love must be... to endure such horror and not turn away...?"

Her breath hitched, mouth clenching shut as she tried to stop herself from speaking her next words, lamenting to herself that it would cause her nothing but pain. That it would only due to prolong the hurt that encapsulated the two of you.

And then she said it, as if it damned her all over again:

"I love thee. I—I love thee, my dearest comrade, and so I ruin thee. I cannot stop myself—I want to, but I cannot!"

And with that—her mouth returned to your skin. Love twisted into starvation.

She bit again, and again. And even as she ruined you further with her hunger, she wept into your skin.

"Please... please... doth not weep, sweet companion..." she sobbed, rocking you gently in her lap, as if she could lull away the hurt. "This pain... this torment... 'tis not of thy making...!"

"It is I... I alone... who hath faltered... who hath fallen..."

She nuzzled your cheek, her skin hot with fever, lips quivering against your temple.

"Thou needst not bear this burden... I swear it," she whispered, her fingers brushing your jaw with heartbreaking gentleness as she wiped away the blood that wasn't hers. "Thou must only forgive me. One

more time. Just one final sin..."

Her fingers curled around your ribs, beneath your ruined shirt.

"And then... then shall I be sated... Then shalt this vile craving leave me be..."

Without warning—her mouth moved lower.

She kissed your sternum. A trembling, reverent press of lips.

Then her jaw unhinged just slightly—and she bit.

Straight into your chest. Not just flesh. Muscle. Bone. A brutal crunch echoed through the room as her teeth cracked through your ribs. Your body seized against her, twitching under the fresh waves of agony.

"I'm sorry..." she whispered, spitting crimson against your chest as her teeth tore free another indiscernible chunk of crimson. "Please... I swear it. This is the end—just a little more, and I'll be whole again."

She plunged back in, gnawing, her cheeks slick with blood and tears. Her hands pressed flat to your stomach now, one trembling—hesitating—while the other gripped your side, sliding lower.

"I love thee—I do, I swear it—I love thee more than honor, more than code, more than the dreams I preach!"

Her mouth found the soft flesh just beneath your ribs.

"I never wanted this! But I must—I must—else I shall lose myself forever—!"

She bit deeper. Your breath hitched, your vision swam. Ripping through muscle and tendon in search of veins, of warmth, of the source.

She tore open your abdomen in clawing strokes—teeth scraping over your stomach, claws peeling back whatever they hooked beneath. Blood welled up with every movement, a bubbling pool of red soaking the floor, her hands, your waist. Bundles of fingers slipped inside. Curling around something to cup underneath her mouth.

And still she sobbed.

"I know it hurts—I know—I feel thy pain—I—I carry it too—!"

She kissed your torn side, her lips brushing shredded flesh like a lover's farewell.

"Just a little more. Just a little more, and I'll stop—I promise! Believe me, please—I'll stop—I swear—!"

She pressed her forehead to your chest again, her fingers plucking around your liver. Her teeth raked your flesh again, tearing your side open. Every bite was a contradiction.

"I am filth... I am damned... I am undeserving of thy kindness..."

She looked up then, her eyes wide and gleaming—redder than everything that was surrounding her.

"But if I must fall... let it be with thee in mine arms..."

And she kissed you again.

On the lips.

Your blood still warm on her tongue.

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